

asking for equal treatment is not in being able to speak a few words of Spanish. The test of compassion for hard-working people in our country who are forced to leave their families to comply with INS requirements is not whether a public official is willing to pose for a picture with people of color.

The test is whether you are willing to actively support legislation that brings real fairness to our immigration laws. That is why I am a cosponsor of this effort for the 6 million immigrants in the U.S. who are not yet citizens, who are only asking for a chance to have their ability to reach out for the American dream, a chance which so many of us have had in the past.

These immigrants add about \$10 billion each year to the U.S. economy and pay at least \$133 billion in taxes, according to a 1998 study. Immigrants pay \$25 billion to \$30 billion more in taxes each year than they receive in public services. Immigrant businesses are a source of substantial economic and fiscal gain for the U.S. citizenry, adding at least another \$29 billion to the total amount of taxes paid.

In a study of real hourly earnings of illegal immigrants between 1988, when they were undocumented, and 1992 when legalized, showed that real hourly earnings increased by 15 percent for men and 21 percent for women. Many of these hard-working people are being exploited because they are not allowed to achieve legal status. The state of the situation on the floor of the Senate is that we are giving speeches instead of offering amendments. It is a sad commentary on this great body that has deliberated some of the most important issues facing America.

Those watching this debate who are witnessing this proceeding in the Senate Chamber must wonder why the Senate isn't filled with Members on both sides of the aisle actively debating the important issues of education and training and reform of our immigration laws. Sadly, this is nothing new. For the past year, this Congress has done little or nothing.

When we see all of the agenda items before us, whether it is education, dealing with health care, a prescription drug benefit under Medicare, the Patients' Bill of Rights for individuals and families to be treated fairly by health insurance companies, this Congress has fallen down time and time again. It is a sad commentary when men and women have been entrusted with the responsibility and the opportunity and have not risen to the challenge. This bill pending today is further evidence that this Congress is not willing to grapple with the important issues that America's families really care about.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. WELLSTONE pertaining to the introduction of S. 3110 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

H-1B VISAS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I would like to also speak now about the H-1B bill on the floor.

I ask unanimous consent that I have 10 minutes to speak on that legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of Oregon). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair. I will not speak a long time. But I want to raise a couple of issues that other colleagues have spoken to as well.

I come from a State with a very sophisticated high-tech industry. I come from a State that has an explosion of information technology companies. I come from a State that has a great medical device industry. I come from a State that is leading the way.

I am very sympathetic to the call on the part of business communities to be able to get more help from skilled labor, including skilled workers from other countries. I am more than sympathetic to what the business community is saying. I certainly believe that immigrants—men and women from other countries who help businesses and work, who stay in our country—make our country a richer and better country.

I am the son of a Jewish immigrant who was born in Ukraine and who fled persecution from Russia. But I also believe that it is a crying shame that we do not have the opportunity—again, this is the greatness of the Senate—to be able to introduce some amendments: an amendment that would focus on education and job training and skill development for Americans who could take some of these jobs; an amendment that deals with telework that is so important to rural America, and so important to rural Minnesota.

I hope there is some way I can get this amendment and this piece of legislation passed, which basically would employ people in rural communities, such as some of the farmers who lost their farms, who have a great work ethic, who want to work, and who want to have a chance to develop their skills for the technology companies that say they need skilled workers. They can telework. They can do it from home or satellite offices. It is a marriage made in heaven. I am hoping to somehow still pass that legislation. I hope it will be an amendment on this bill because, again, it would enable these Americans to have a chance.

My colleague from New Mexico is one of the strongest advocates for Native Americans. This was such an interesting meeting this past Sunday in Minnesota. I give FCC Chairman Kennard a lot of credit for holding a 3-day workshop for people in Indian country who not only don't have access to the Internet but who still don't have phones. They were talking about guest workers and others coming to our country. These were the first Americans. They were saying: we want to be a part of this new economy; we want to have a chance to learn the skills. We want to be wired. We want to have the infrastructure.

I hope there can be an amendment that speaks to the concerns and circumstances of people in Indian country.

Finally, I think the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act is important for not only the Latino community but also for the Liberian community. I am worried about the thousands of Liberians in Minnesota who at the end of the month maybe will have to leave this country if we don't have some kind of change. This legislation calls for permanent residency status for them. But I am terribly worried they are going to be forced to go back. It would be very dangerous for them and their families. I certainly think there is a powerful, moral, and ethical plan for the Latino and Latina community in this legislation. We had hoped that would be an amendment. Again, it doesn't look as if we are going to have an opportunity to present this amendment. I don't think that is the Senate at its best.

I will vote for cloture on a bill that I actually think is a good piece of legislation but not without the opportunity for us to consider some of these amendments. They could have time limits where we could try to improve this bill. We can make sure this is good for the business community and good for the people in our country who want to have a chance to be a part of this new economy, as well as bringing in skilled workers from other countries. I think we could do all of it. It could be a win-win-win.

The Senate is at its best when we can bring these amendments to the floor and therefore have an opportunity to represent people in our States and be legislators. But when we are shut down and closed out, then I think Senators have every right to say we can't support this. That is certainly going to be my position.

I yield the floor.

HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION PROVISIONS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes.